

Buckingham Major.

*Cur' Special' tent' in Festo Sanctorum
Simonis & Judæ ss. Die Dominico
xxviii. die Octobris, 1705. Annoque
Regni Reginae Annæ, Angliæ, &c.
Quarto.*

IT is Order'd That the Thanks of this Court be given to the Reverend Mr. *Harris*, for his Sermon this day Preached before the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor and Aldermen of this City, at the Chapel of the *Guild-Hall* of the said City, and this Court doth desire him to Print the same.

Asbhurst.

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*The Modest Christian's Duty, as to Indifferent
Things in the Worship of God.*

A
S E R M O N

Preached before the

Lord Mayor,

At Guild-Hall Chapel,

On Sunday, October 28. 1705.

Being the Festival of St. Simon and St. Jude.

B Y

JOHN HARRIS, M.A. F. R. S.

And Chaplain to the Right Honourable

The LORD KEEPER.

L O N D O N :

Printed for R. Wilkin, at the *King's-Head* in St. Paul's
Church-yard, 1705.

The Model Church of the Holy Trinity
in the City of London

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Preached before His

Lord Mayor

At Guild-Hall Chapel

On Sunday, October 28. 1705.

Being the Festival of St. Simon and St. Jude.

BY

JOHN HARRIS, M.A. F.R.S.

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THE LORD KEPPEL

L O N D O N :

Printed for R. WATSON, at the Angel in St. Pauls Church-yard, 1705.

A S E R M O N

Preached before the

Lord Mayor,

Octob. 28. 1705.

Rom. XIV. 22, 23.

Hast thou Faith? have it to thy self before God; happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth: but he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of Faith; for whatsoever is not of Faith, is Sin.

IN order to the true Understanding of these Words, it will be necessary for me fully to explain to you these Things, which are the several Parts of the Text.

I. What is to be understood here by Faith; *Hast thou Faith? have it to thy self, &c. what is not of Faith, is Sin.*

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II. What

II. What is meant by having *this Faith to our selves before God.*

III. Wherein the Happiness lyeth, of *not condemning our selves in that thing which we allow.*

IV. What is meant by Doubting, and how he that *doubteth, is said to be damned, if he eat.*

V. The Reason of that seemingly severe Sentence pronounced in the last Particular; because, *whatsoever is not of Faith, is Sin.* And,

First, Let us consider what is here to be understood by Faith; *Hast thou Faith? &c.*

Now, *Faith* hath divers Acceptations in Scripture: sometimes 'tis taken for the Sum and Substance of our Religion; as when we read of *the Faith that was once delivered to the Saints*; sometimes it implies a Belief and Expectation of the Joys of the Life to come; as in that Definition of St. Paul, *That Faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen*: sometimes also 'tis taken for Trust in, and Dependance upon God, and for a Resignation of our selves entirely into his Hands. Thus our Saviour bids his Disciples to have Faith in God, and to believe in him; and upbraids them with their want of *Faith*, or with the small Proportion that they had of it. And sometimes also *Faith* is taken for a firm Belief or Persuasion of Mind, that it is a Man's Duty to do, or to forbear to do this or that particular Thing; and this undoubtedly was the Meaning of our Apostle in this Place; as the

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Occasion of these Words, with a regard to what goeth before in this Chapter, will abundantly satisfie us.

For this was the Case; a great many, or perhaps most of the *Jews* that were newly Converted to Christianity, were of Opinion, that the *Jewish* Law was still to be kept, and the Mosaical Rites and Observations eternally to be perform'd: and this they were very zealous for; and according to the Genius of that Morose and Ill-natured Nation, very Censorious about. They condemn'd the *Gentile* Profelytes as Profane and Unclean, And when they saw them eat of all Kinds of Meat without any distinction, they pass'd a very severe Judgment upon them.

On the other side, the new Converts of the *Gentiles*, upbraided the *Jewish* Christians with their being enslaved to Ordinances and Rites, which in the Liberty of the Gospel, were to cease and be abolish'd; and thus both sides ran out into Extreams and Heat, and broke Christian Charity with one another.

And by both, indeed (as is the Natural consequence of Division) was the Progress of the Gospel hindred: For the Disuse and Abrogation of the *Jewish* Ceremonies, grievously offended that Nation, who knew that they were enjoined at first in a most glorious and wonderful Manner by God Himself, and who did not understand that they were Temporary only, and to continue but till the Time of the *Messiah*, of whom they were Types and Shadows.

And indeed, the Wisdom of God very much appears, in not letting the *Jews* discover this Point sooner, lest they should have slighted and despised that Law, that they were for a time to be Governed by.

On the other side, the *Gentile* Christians were mightily pleased with that Liberty which the Gracious and Merciful Dispensation of the Gospel did allow them; and they were by no means willing to take upon them so grievous a Burden, as that of the Mosaical and Ceremonial Law.

This was the State of the Controversie at the time when St. Paul wrote this Epistle: and here 'tis observable, that though the *Jewish* Christians were in the Wrong, and the *Gentiles* in the Right; for the Mosaical and Ceremonial Law was undoubtedly to be abolished by the *Messiah*. Yet, I say, 'tis observable that our Apostle blames them both (*ver. 4.*) and also exhorts both Parties to Charity, Humility and Unity: And he gives the Words of my Text as a Rule to direct their behaviour in reference to such Points, *Hast thou Faith*, &c. which is as much as if he had said, Have any of you a Belief and firm Persuasion of Mind, that ye ought to do, or not to do, any thing in its own Nature indifferent, keep then this Belief to your self, and transact the Matter between God and your own Conscience; you ought by no means to Censure and Exclaim against others, for not Believing or Acting just as you do; 'tis enough for thee, that thou canst have the satisfaction of Acting according to thy Conscience before God.

But

But yet know this also, that if thou eatest Mear, that thou believest and art fully persuaded is Unclean : Or, if thou dost any other thing (though indifferent in it self) which thou hast a *Faith* or Satisfaction of Mind that thou oughtest not to do ; thou wilt then certainly be condemned by thy own Conscience, and guilty of Sin, because thou proceedest contrary to thy Judgment, *Faith*, or Belief.

Now if this be the Apostle's Sense, as it appears plainly to me to be ; it is then clear, that by *Faith* here, he means that Conviction, Persuasion or Belief that any one hath in his Mind about some particular thing, whether it be Lawful for him to do it or not.

And this is the very same, with what our Apostle calls Knowledge, 1 *Cor.* 7. 8, & 10. by which Word he there understands a Satisfaction of Mind, or a full Conviction, that eating of Meat offer'd to Idols was unlawful ; Which he that had, was certainly guilty of a grievous Sin, if he did do : But, saith he, *v.* 7. *There is not in every Man that knowledge, for some with Conscience of the Idol, eat it as a thing offer'd unto an Idol, and their Conscience, being weak, is defiled :* That is, their Faith and Persuasion about this thing being not perfect and steady, they cannot stand fast in their Duty ; but are perverted to eat at those Idolatrous Feasts, which are wicked Symbols of a Solemn Covenant made with those false Deities, and by which those that did partake of them, were thereby Judged (as he argues) to be Partakers of the Idolatrous Service and Worship.

And

And thus I have explained the first and chief Particular in these Words, and shewed you what is to be understood here by Faith. I come next to enquire,

Secondly, What is meant by having this Faith to our selves before God.

And this seems to be a Peaceable and Charitable Precept, exceedingly agreeable to the Doctrine of the Gospel : And implies, in the General, thus much.

That if in any indifferent Things, we are fully convicted, persuaded and satisfied, or have a Faith or a Belief, that we ought to proceed in such a manner, tho' we may, and ought to act according to this Persuasion ; yet we may content our selves in approving our Hearts to God in Sincerity : And we need not trouble our selves to Profelyte or bring over, at least not by violent Means and Ways, others to our Opinions ; much less may we condemn and censure them for not believing and acting just as we do. This, I say, is the general meaning of this Direction of our Apostle : But it will admit of several Limitations and Restrictions, according as Times and Circumstances vary.

When this Epistle was written, Christianity was but in its Infancy : There was then no Church settled and established by the Civil Power and Authority, and consequently no Obligation upon any one as to these Matters, but what arose from the sincere Dictates of a Man's own Conscience : There was no Body of stated Rules to direct Men, as to the Measures of their Obedience
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in these Points: And therefore now, excepting where a particular Revelation to some Apostle determined the Matter, and except where he had by word of Mouth, or Epistle, by verbal or written Order enjoyn'd a certain Method of proceeding, every Man's private Judgment was his sufficient Guide and Director as to these indifferent Things; for of such only it was that our Apostle here wrote to the *Corinthians*, and of such only I now speak.

But afterwards the Apostles thought it necessary to give particular Commands and Directions about these Matters, and a general Power was committed to the Church to establish such Laws and Usages as should be agreeable to Decency and Order: And then after this, Men could not be so free in this Point as they were before.

For it seems to me highly reasonable to believe, that every one that is born or made a Member of any Nation or Commonwealth, owes naturally an Obedience to such Laws as shall be enacted by the Government he is under, if nothing be enjoyned him which is contrary to the Laws of God.

And therefore, if in Things indifferent in their own Nature, the Government or Authority thinks it fitting to determine the Case any one way, we are then no longer free to chuse whether we will act or not act, join with, or dissent from the Injunctions of our Governours; but an actual Obedience and Compliance seems to be undoubtedly our Duty. And tho' some such things may be enjoyned us, as, had we been qualified by our Station, we might and would have
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opposed and declared against, before they were made obligatory by Law ; yet when once they are become so, we ought in Conscience to submit to the Use and Practice of them. And if we have a Belief or Persuasion in our own private Thoughts, either that it had been better to have left Men more to their Freedom in such Cases, to have made the Terms of Communion larger , or to have determined our Obedience some other way ; yet ought we to have this Faith to our selves before God, and by no means to disturb the Peace of the Constitution whereof we are Members, by declaring or exclaiming against the Established Church ; and much less should we so divide and separate from it, as to set up, or joyn with another Interest in opposition to it.

When indeed any thing is enacted or intruded upon us, which is contrary to the Laws of God, and to the express Words of Scripture, we must by no means forfeit our Integrity by a base and servile Compliance ; but bravely resolve (according to the Examples of the Apostles and Primitive Christians) to obey God rather than Man, whatever that Resolution may expose us to. But then, as such a Noble Courage and Stedfastness as this is, is highly commendable where 'tis exercised about a Fundamental Point in Religion, and where the Weight and Necessity of the thing will bear us out ; so not to discern and distinguish between Mint and Cummin, and the weightier Matters of the Law of God ; but as stiffly to refuse our Compliance with a few Innocent and Indifferent Ceremonies, as we would with Idolatry or Popery, shews that we have not duly weighed and consider'd the Natures of Things, and indeed be-
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trays a Narrowness of Spirit equal to the Meanness of our Judgment.

But if we will take our Apostle's Advice and Direction, we shall not act so precariously, so contrary to Reason, and the true Spirit of Christianity: Suppose, in our own private Thoughts we do not approve of as *the best*, some things in the Publick Establishment: which perhaps is the Case of many thinking Men, as to some slight and less momentous Particulars; and which, it doth not seem necessary that the Civil Power shou'd take any notice of; much less use coercive Means to make us change our Sentiments; This being a Matter which, in its own Nature, and abstractedly considered, tends no way to the Detriment of the Publick Good. A Liberty of Thought, Opinion, and Conscience about these things, every Man seems to have a reasonable Right to enjoy free and unmolested: As also the peaceable Exercise of such Practices as are the natural Result of the Sentiments of Religious, Honest, and Well-meaning Men: *i. e.* such as they have a *Faith* or Persuasion, are most agreeable to the Word of God and the Dictates of Right Reason: and this is such a Liberty as (I hope) will never be infringed by our Constitution, nor envied or grudg'd by any Party of it; because, I am fully persuaded that it tends every way to our Welfare, Advantage and Security, to the Interest of the Religion, to that of the Establish'd Church, and to the Increase of its Members.

But however, I say, tho' all Men can never be brought to be of the same Mind, yet they ought to submit in all things they can to the Ordinances of Man for the Lord's sake; and where nothing is en-

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joined them that can be proved unlawful, and contrary to God's Holy Word; they appear to me to be bound in Conscience to an Actual Compliance and Conformity.

But after all, if they cannot think so, they may satisfy themselves very well in keeping their own Private Opinion to themselves; for, as our Apostle saith in this Place, *Happy*, and happy enough is he, *that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.*

Which is the Third Thing I am to consider in these Words; *viz.* Wherein the Happiness consists, of not condemning our selves in those Things which we allow.

And on this I think I need not much insist, since every one that knows what Conscience is, can easily perceive in himself the unspeakable Satisfaction of acting according to the Dictates of that constant Monitor: he that can approve himself to this Judge; that can say sincerely, that his Conscience doth not condemn him for the Practice of any one Thing he alloweth himself in; that Man hath an eternal Sweetness of Pleasure and Satisfaction within him; and such an one too, as infinitely surpasses all the most ravishing Delights of Sense: This is such a Peace, as the World cannot give, nor, God be thank'd, take away neither: Well therefore might the Apostle pronounce him happy that hath it; *Happy is that Man that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.*

Fourthly,

Fourthly, I am next to enquire, what is meant here by doubting; and why he that doubteth, is said to be damned if he eat.

And this were indeed a very hard Sentence, if by doubting, we were here to understand what is usually meant by this Word: but though the Word διακρίνω do sometimes signifie doubting, yet it is more usually and more properly render'd *discerning*; and so the Margin of our Bible has it in this place, he that *discerneth* (*i. e.*) he that judgeth, plainly perceiveth or distinguisheth between the things in dispute; he that having well weighed and considered the Matter, is come to a Determination in his own Mind, and judgeth and discerneth on the whole, that 'tis his Duty to act after such a manner.

And no doubt, when things are come to such a Balance, and brought to this Determination, he that shall then act contrary to his Judgment and Persuasion, he is indeed *damn'd*, or Self-condemn'd; because he proceeds contrary to his Conscience, and to that full Conviction and Persuasion which he hath in his own Mind.

And thus it was in the case before us; the Apostle tells us, that he himself was fully persuaded, *that there is nothing unclean of itself*, v. 14. and therefore he and those Christians that were of this Persuasion, could and did eat of any thing indifferently, without observing the Mosaical Distinctions, which they believed ought now to be abolish'd.

But the Jewish Christians could not (it seems) think themselves freed so easily from the Obligation of a Law they had so long been under, and which they knew was enacted by God himself, in a Divine and miraculous manner. These could not be persuaded, but that their Law was of Eternal Obligation; and that the legal Distinction between Clean and Unclean Meats, was still to be continued and observed: And indeed, as the Apostle saith, while they were under this Persuasion, and did think any particular kind of Meat to be unclean, to *them* it was unclean; and therefore should those Men have eaten of all things without Distinction, while they thus *discern'd*, or *judg'd*, or while they did put this legal Difference between Meats, they would then have been condemned by their own Conscience, as acting against the full Conviction and Persuasion of their own Minds, or contrary to that Faith or Belief that was in them; *For whatsoever is not of Faith, is Sin.*

Which is the last Particular I am to speak to, *viz.* the Reason of this severe Sentence; *That he that doubteth, is damn'd if he eat; because, whatsoever is not of Faith, is Sin.*

St. *John* gives this Definition of Sin; That it is the Transgression of the Law, and where there is no Law, there is certainly no Transgression: Now 'tis essential to every Law, that it should be promulgated, or sufficiently made known to those Persons that are under the Obligation of it. And it has always been adjudged, that invincible Ignorance, or such as is no way culpable in the Offender; that is, such an one as is no way occasion'd by his own Fault or Neglect, doth acquit a Man from

from the Guilt of any Transgression : But where a Man has a plain Knowledge or Belief; when he is fully persuaded in his own Mind, that he is under the Power or Obligation of such a Command; when he hath a *Faith* that to do, or to forbear to do such a thing is unlawful; then his Conscience discerneth or determineth him how to act; and if in such a case a Man proceed contrary to this Light, this Conviction that he has in his Mind, he certainly then commits a Sin, because he doth that which he is fully persuaded is the Transgression of the Law.

This I take to be the plain Meaning of these Words; and this is the Sum of the Apostle's whole Argument, as to the Point before us. That, in the first place, 'tis every Man's Duty to inform himself, as fully as he can, of the Nature and Circumstances of the Things requir'd of him to perform or submit to; or, as he expresses it, *v. 5. of this Chapter, to endeavour to be fully persuaded in his own mind.*

He ought thoroughly to examine and consider the Nature of Things, and laying aside all Interest, Partiality, Prejudice, Favour or Affection; seriously to weigh in the Scales of Reason and Conscience, on the one hand the case of a Submission to and Compliance with the Use of a few indifferent Things, for the Unity and Peace of the Church, and for the Welfare of the Constitution; though in his own private Judgment, he may think them better let alone, or altered; and on the other hand, the evil Consequence of a Separation and Dissent; which, let him mean never so well, will divide, and consequently weaken our Constitution.

It is by no means impossible, but that even some good, serious and considerate Men, may, by Education, by reading Books written only on one side, or by means of a Spirit and Conversation equally narrow, have wrong and prejudicate Notions of some things in the Establish'd Church; and therefore Men ought always to be aware of this, and not proceed too hastily in making a final Determination, before they have *heard* with their *own* Ears, and seen with their *own* Eyes. And he that will do this candidly and honestly, will never prejudice either the Church, or himself, by his Occasional Conformity.

But at last, when a Man hath impartially brought things to this fair Balance; that Side which he discerneth to out weigh the other, he ought indeed to adhere to, and by no means to deviate from that which he is fully convinc'd 'tis his Duty to do: for if he act contrary to this Persuasion or Belief he certainly commits a Sin: *For whatsoever is not of Faith is sin.*

But in Indifferent things he may and ought to keep this Faith to himself before God; and by no means to disturb the Common Peace, or to break the Rules of Charity about them. He may please himself in that Satisfaction which he enjoys in his own Mind, that he doth not act contrary to his Conscience: for happy is he that condemneth not himself in the thing which he alloweth; but he ought by no means to judge or censure others, much less set at nought or despise others for not doing just as he doth: but as St. Paul tells us (before in this Chapter) he should *judge this rather, that no Man put a stumbling-block or an occasion to fall in his Brother's*

ther's way; and above all things let him endeavour to follow after Peace, and those things wherewith one may edifie another. That so, there being no Heats nor Disputes among us about Trifles and indifferent things, as I hope in Time there will not; we may all unite in carrying on the great Work and the main Business of Religion, the Salvation of our own and other Mens Souls. Here let all our Zeal and Warmth shew itself, and here only; let us contend earnestly only for the great Fundamentals of Religion, for that Faith which was once delivered to the Saints. Let us provoke one another only to Love and Good Works; But let all Bitterness, and Wrath, and Anger, and Clamour, and Evil-speaking be put away from us, with all Malice; and let us be kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven us.

I shall close all with that Doxology, which in some antient Copies of this Epistle, is immediately added after the Words of the Text, tho, now transposed to Chap. 16. Ver. 25.

Now to him that is of Power to establish you according to the Gospel and Preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the Revelation of the Mystery, which was kept secret since the World began, but now is made manifest, and by the Scriptures of the Prophets, according to the Commandment of the Everlasting God, made known to all Nations, for the Obedience of Faith; to God only wise be Glory, through Jesus Christ, for ever. Amen.

F I N I S.

BOOKS Printed for Rich. Wilkin,
at the King's-Head in St. Paul's
Church-yard.

THE Atheistical Objections against the Being of a God, and his Attributes, fairly consider'd and fully refuted. In 8 Sermons, Preach'd in St. Paul's Church, 1689. Being the seventh year of the Lecture founded By the Honourable *Robert Boyle*, Esquire.

The Practice of Religious and Moral Duties, the best way to make a Nation happy. Being a Sermon Preach'd April 4. 1701.

A Fast Sermon, Preach'd May 26. 1703:

All by *John Harris*, M. A. and Fellow of the
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